In the claims:

1.   (Currently amended) A method by which a multimedia message is transcoded *en route* from a sending terminal ~~(21)~~ via a messaging server ~~(22)~~ to a receiving terminal ~~(25) having limited multimedia capabilities, so as to be suitable for reception and presentation by the receiving terminal (25)~~, the method comprising ~~characterized by~~:

~~a step (31) in which~~ a user agent ~~(21a)~~ of the sending terminal ~~(21)~~ inserting ~~inserts~~, into the message, media characteristics of the message sufficient in detail to enable determining whether the message should be transcoded to accommodate multimedia capabilities of the receiving terminal ~~(25)~~; and

~~a step (33) in which~~ the messaging server ~~(22)~~ reading ~~reads~~ the media characteristics and deciding ~~decides~~ whether the message should be transcoded based only on the inserted media characteristics and on actual or assumed multimedia capabilities of the receiving terminal ~~(25)~~.

2.   (Currently amended) A method as in claim 1, wherein ~~further characterized in that~~ the messaging server ~~(22)~~ sends the message to a transcoding server ~~(24)~~ if transcoding is needed, and the transcoding server ~~(24)~~ uses the inserted media characteristics to itself decide if transcoding is needed.

3.   (Currently amended) A method as in claim 1, wherein ~~further characterized in that~~ the messaging server ~~(22)~~ sends the message to a transcoding server ~~(24)~~ if transcoding is needed, and the transcoding server ~~(24)~~ uses the inserted media characteristics to itself decide which parts of the message need transcoding.

4. (Currently amended) A method as in claim 1, wherein~~further characterized in that~~ the messaging server ~~(22)~~ determines, from the inserted media characteristics, which parts of the message need transcoding and sends the message to a transcoding server ~~(24)~~ if transcoding is needed for any message part, and includes in the message an indication of which parts of the message need transcoding.

5. (Currently amended) A method as in claim 1, wherein~~further characterized in that~~ the messaging server ~~(22)~~ determines, from the inserted media characteristics, which parts of the message need transcoding and sends only those message parts requiring transcoding to a transcoding server ~~(24)~~.

6. (Currently amended) A method as in claim 1, wherein ~~further characterized by: a step (35) in which~~ the transcoding is performed based on the inserted media characteristics and the actual or assumed multimedia capabilities of the receiving terminal ~~(25)~~, without performing an analysis of the message to determine whether transcoding is needed.

7. (Currently amended) A method as in claim 6, wherein ~~in the step (35) in which transcoding is performed,~~ the transcoding is performed without also performing even an analysis to determine which parts of the message need to be transcoded.

8. (Currently amended) A method as in claim 1, wherein the user agent ~~(21a)~~ inserts the media characteristics into a field in the header of the message.

9. (Currently amended) A method as in claim 1, wherein the user agent ~~(21a)~~ inserts the media characteristics into a header field

in the body of the message.

10.   (Previously presented) A method as in claim 1, wherein the media characteristics include image and video resolution, or number of frames and frame rate of visual content, or sampling rate of audio content.

11.   (Currently amended) A sending terminal ~~(21)~~, ~~adapted for sending a multimedia message via a messaging server (22) to a receiving terminal (25) having limited multimedia capabilities, the sending terminal (21) characterized by~~ comprising a processor configured to:

      determine media characteristics of a message sufficient in detail to enable a messaging terminal to determine whether the message should be transcoded based only on actual or assumed multimedia capabilities of a receiving terminal and the inserted media characteristics; and

      insert~~a user agent (21a) for inserting,~~ the media characteristics into the message~~, media characteristics of the message sufficient in detail to enable the messaging terminal to determine whether the message should be transcoded based only on actual or assumed multimedia capabilities of the receiving terminal and the inserted media characteristics~~.

12.   (Currently amended) A messaging server ~~(22)~~, ~~enhanced for determining whether to transcode a multimedia message sent from a sending terminal (21) to a receiving terminal (25) having limited multimedia capabilities, the messaging server (22) characterized by~~ comprising a processor configured to:

      obtain media characteristics inserted into a message intended for a receiving terminal; and

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decide ~~a characteristics reader and analyzer (22a),~~ ~~responsive to the message, for deciding~~ whether the message should be transcoded based only on comparing the media characteristics ~~inserted into the message~~ with actual or assumed multimedia capabilities of the receiving terminal ~~(25)~~.

13.   (Currently amended) A system, comprising a sending terminal ~~(21)~~ and a messaging server ~~(22)~~, ~~both adapted to perform according to a method by which a multimedia message is transcoded en route from the sending terminal (21) via the messaging server (22) to a receiving terminal (25) having limited multimedia capabilities, so as to be suitable for reception or presentation by the receiving terminal (25), the system characterized in that~~wherein:

the sending terminal is configured to insert, ~~includes a user agent (21a) for performing a step (31) of inserting,~~ into ~~the~~ a message for a receiving terminal, media characteristics of the message sufficient in detail to enable determining whether the message should be transcoded to accommodate multimedia capabilities of the receiving terminal ~~(25)~~; and

the messaging server is configured to read ~~(22) includes means (22a) for performing a step (33) of reading~~ the media characteristics and decide~~deciding~~ whether the message should be transcoded based only on the media characteristics and on actual or assumed multimedia capabilities of the receiving terminal ~~(25)~~.

14.   (Currently amended) A system as in claim 13, wherein ~~further characterized in that: the messaging server (22) also includes or has access to means for performing a step (35) in which transcoding is performed~~the messaging server is further configured to transcode the message based on the inserted media characteristics and the

actual or assumed multimedia capabilities of the receiving terminal ~~(25)~~, without performing an analysis of the message to determine media characteristics of the message relevant to deciding whether transcoding is needed.

15.   (Currently amended) A system as in claim 13, ~~further comprising a transcoding server (24), the system further characterized in that~~ wherein the messaging server ~~(22)~~ is further configured to send the message to a~~the~~ transcoding server ~~(24)~~ if transcoding is needed, and the transcoding server ~~(24)~~ is configured to use the inserted media characteristics to itself decide if transcoding is needed.

16.   (Currently amended) A system as in claim 13, wherein ~~further comprising a transcoding server (24), the system further characterized in that~~ the messaging server ~~(22)~~ is further configured to send the message to a~~the~~ transcoding server ~~(24)~~ if transcoding is needed, and the transcoding server ~~(24)~~ is configured to use the inserted media characteristics to itself decide which parts of the message need transcoding.

17.   (Currently amended) A system as in claim 13, wherein~~further comprising a transcoding server (24), the system further characterized in that~~ the messaging server ~~(22)~~ is further configured to determine, from the inserted media characteristics, which parts of the message need transcoding and to send the message to a~~the~~ transcoding server ~~(24)~~ if transcoding is needed for any message part, and to include in the message an indication of which parts of the message need transcoding.

18.   (Currently amended) A system as in claim 13, further comprising a transcoding engine~~means~~ for transcoding ~~(22-24)~~ the

message, wherein ~~and further characterized in that~~ the ~~means for~~ transcoding ~~(22 24)~~ is performed based on the inserted media characteristics and the actual or assumed multimedia capabilities of the receiving terminal ~~(25)~~, without performing an analysis of the message to determine whether transcoding is needed.

19.   (Currently amended) A computer program product comprising: a computer readable storage structure embodying computer program code thereon for execution by a computer processor in a sending terminal ~~(21)~~, wherein said computer program code ~~characterized in that it~~ includes instructions for performing ~~the steps of~~ the method of claim 21~~1 indicated as being performed by the sending terminal~~ ~~(21)~~.

20.   (Currently amended) A computer program product comprising: a computer readable storage structure embodying computer program code thereon for execution by a computer processor in a messaging server ~~(22)~~, wherein said computer program code ~~characterized in that it~~ includes instructions for performing ~~the steps of~~ the method of claim 24~~1 indicated as being performed by the messaging server~~ ~~(22)~~.

21.   (New) A method for use by a sending terminal comprising:

        determining media characteristics for media components of a message intended for a receiving terminal, wherein the media characteristics are sufficient in detail to enable determining whether the message should be transcoded to accommodate multimedia capabilities of the receiving terminal; and

        inserting the media characteristics into the message.

22.   (New) A method as in claim 21, wherein the message has a

header portion and a body portion, and the media characteristics ·
are inserted into a field in the header of the message.

23. (New) A method as in claim 21, wherein the message has a
header portion and a body portion, and the media characteristics
are inserted into a header field in the body of the message.

24. (New) A method for use by a messaging server comprising:

obtaining media characteristics inserted into a message
intended for a receiving terminal; and

deciding whether the message should be transcoded based only
on the inserted media characteristics and on actual or assumed
multimedia capabilities of the receiving terminal.

25. (New) A method as in claim 24, wherein the message has a
header portion and a body portion, and the media characteristics
are obtained from a field in the header of the message.

26. (New) A method as in claim 24, wherein the message has a
header portion and a body portion, and the media characteristics
are obtained from a header field in the body of the message.

27. (New) An apparatus for transmitting a message, the apparatus
comprising a processor configured to:

determine media characteristics for a media component of the
message; and

provide the media characteristics in the message.

28. (New) An apparatus as in claim 27, wherein the message has a
header portion and a body portion, and the media characteristics
are provided in a field in the header of the message.

29.   (New) An apparatus as in claim 27, wherein the message has a header portion and a body portion, and the media characteristics are provided in a header field in the body of the message.

30.   (New) A method for transmitting a message, the method comprising:

determining media characteristics for a media component of the message; and

providing the media characteristics in the message.

31.   (New) A method as in claim 30, wherein the message has a header portion and a body portion, and the media characteristics are provided in a field in the header of the message.

32.   (New) A method as in claim 30, wherein the message has a header portion and a body portion, and the media characteristics are provided in a header field in the body of the message.

33.   (New) An apparatus for processing a message, the apparatus comprising a processor configured to:

receive media characteristics of a media component of the message in a field of the message; and

determine whether the message should be transcoded based at least in part on the received media characteristics and on actual or assumed multimedia capabilities of a receiving terminal.

34.   (New) An apparatus as in claim 33, wherein the message has a header portion and a body portion, and the media characteristics are provided in a field in the header of the message.

35.   (New) An apparatus as in claim 33, wherein the message has a

header portion and a body portion, and the media characteristics are provided in a header field in the body of the message.

36. (New) An apparatus as in claim 33, wherein the processor is further configured to:

determine media components of the message which need transcoding based at least on the respective received media characteristics; and

transmit at least a part of the message to a transcoding server.

37. (New) An apparatus as in claim 33, wherein the processor is further configured to:

transcode a media component of the message based at least on the actual or assumed multimedia capabilities of the receiving terminal.

38. (New) A method for processing a message, the method comprising:

receiving media characteristics of a media component of the message in a field of the message; and

determining whether the message should be transcoded based at least in part on the received media characteristics and on actual or assumed multimedia capabilities of a receiving terminal.

39. (New) A method as in claim 38, wherein the message has a header portion and a body portion, and the media characteristics are received in a field in the header of the message.

40. (New) A method as in claim 38, wherein the message has a

header portion and a body portion, and the media characteristics are received in a header field in the body of the message.

41.   (New) A method as in claim 38, further comprising:

determining which media components of the message need transcoding based at least on the respective received media characteristics; and

transmitting to a transcoding server at least the media components that need transcoding.

42.   (New) A method as in claim 38, further comprising:

transcoding a media component of the message based at least on the actual or assumed multimedia capabilities of the receiving terminal.